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Executive summary of the measures outlined in the letter dated 17 March 1997 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Secretary-General has taken a number of far-reaching measures designed to transfer resources from administration to economic and social programmes; streamline the Secretariat and consolidate functions; enhance support for intergovernmental processes; reorient information services; expand common services; integrate activities at the country level; and reduce costs. Decisions have also been taken on mechanisms and timetables for implementation and on the designation of action managers.

Management measures related to Secretariat structures and functions

Secretariat activities in the economic and social areas will be integrated. The functions of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and the Department for Development Support and Management Services will be merged into a single Department. Some of the functions and activities of the Department for Development Support and Management Services will be redistributed. The new Secretariat arrangements should serve to bolster support for Africa's development, South-South cooperation and the sustainable development of small island developing States.

Public information will be reoriented. The Department of Public Information will be transformed into an Office for Communications and Media Services, which will incorporate the latest media technologies and techniques. Emphasis will be placed on the delivery of communications and outreach services to Member States, the media and non-governmental organizations. Closer links with the substantive Departments will be established and resources reallocated to country offices.

Major technical support services for the General Assembly and other intergovernmental bodies and Conference Services will be integrated into a Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services.

Decentralization of services will be explored, in particular translation, printing and publications.

Budget and transfer of resources from administration to programmes

The Secretary-General's proposed regular budget for the biennium 1998-1999 will be around $123 million lower than in the previous biennium. In addition to this reduction in real terms, the Secretary-General has:

- Instructed the Department of Administration and Management to present a detailed plan for a reduction of at least one third in the proportion of resources devoted to administration and other non-programme costs in the regular budget by the year 2001, with the resources released reallocated to economic and social programmes;

- Proposed a reduction of approximately 1,000 posts in the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

United Nations at the country level

In order to better integrate United Nations activities at the country level, in full consultation with and in support of the Government concerned, the Secretary-General has decided:

- To strengthen further the position of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Coordinator as his designated representative for development cooperation and Leader of the United Nations Country Team;

- To request that all United Nations Funds and Programmes in charge of development activities at the country level join together in a common United Nations Development Assistance Framework;

- To intensify the drive for common premises and common services;

- To request the heads of the United Nations Funds and Programmes to assist the Secretary-General in ensuring that the appointment of leaders of country staff meet the needs and priorities of developing countries;

- To integrate fully the United Nations information centres into the Resident Coordinator's Office.

Streamlining and consolidation of administrative, financial, personnel, procurement and other services

Existing arrangements throughout the Organization will be closely examined to determine areas for extending common services and the possible establishment of a common service facility.

Code of Conduct

A draft Code of Conduct has been prepared and will be submitted to the General Assembly. It will require the highest standards of efficiency,

competence, independence and integrity of United Nations staff, as stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations.

Reduction in documentation

A target of 25 per cent for the reduction in documentation has been set, to be achieved by no later than the end of 1998.

Previous management measures

Programme Managers have been empowered to take action in their areas of responsibility, thus reducing layers of centralized administration. The Secretary-General has also created the following mechanisms:

- A Policy Coordination Group, composed of the heads of Departments and Offices of the Secretariat and the heads of UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), has been established under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General. Executive Committees have been set up in the four key substantive areas of United Nations activity: Peace and Security, Economic and Social Affairs, Development Operations and Humanitarian Affairs, each with its own designated Convenor, to group together some 30 United Nations entities. Human rights issues will cut across the work of the four groups;

- An Executive Coordinator for United Nations Reform has been appointed to advise and assist the Secretary-General in overseeing the reform process. He chairs a Steering Committee on United Nations Reform composed of senior officials representing the span of activities of the Organization;

- All relevant entities will establish reform groups. In conjunction with the Management Reform Group in the Department of Administration and Management, which is replacing the Efficiency Board, they will form a network on which the Executive Coordinator and the Steering Committee can draw.